

PUBLIC LANDS.

LETTER

FROM THE

COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

TO THE

HON. MR. HAILE,

OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

JANUARY 10, 1828.

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1828.

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GENERAL LAND OFFICE,

7th January, 1828.

SIR : In reply to your letter of the 4th instant, I have to state that, understanding there was a very valuable body of land lying along the margin of Lake Washington, (a large lake in the Mississippi Swamp,) and free from inundation for nearly a mile back from the lake, instructions were given to Mr. Davis, in January, 1826, (see No. 1,) to extend his meridian and parallel lines to that lake, and to have the lands fronting on it surveyed, agreeably to the provisions of the act passed the 24th May, 1824 ; in pursuance of which instructions he entered into contract with Mr. Babbit, to survey the lands in the neighborhood of that lake, which contract never has been completed, as appears from the enclosed copy of a letter addressed by Mr. Davis to you, and forwarded to this office, (No. 2;) and also from the extract of a letter from Mr. Davis, to this office, (marked No. 3,) dated the 29th of June, 1827. Mr. Babbit is since dead. In consequence of a recommendation from this office, a bill was reported to the House, authorizing an increase of the price for surveying this description of lands, but was not acted upon.

Very respectfully, sir,

Your obedient servant,

GEO. GRAHAM.

Hon. WM. HAILE,

House of Representatives.

The first part of the report is devoted to a general description of the country and its resources. It is followed by a detailed account of the various industries and occupations of the people. The third part of the report is devoted to a description of the various towns and villages of the country. The fourth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various churches and religious institutions of the country. The fifth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various schools and educational institutions of the country. The sixth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various hospitals and medical institutions of the country. The seventh part of the report is devoted to a description of the various prisons and penitentiaries of the country. The eighth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various asylums and institutions for the insane of the country. The ninth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various almshouses and institutions for the poor of the country. The tenth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various charitable institutions of the country. The eleventh part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public buildings of the country. The twelfth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public works of the country. The thirteenth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public utilities of the country. The fourteenth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public services of the country. The fifteenth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public institutions of the country. The sixteenth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public buildings of the country. The seventeenth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public works of the country. The eighteenth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public utilities of the country. The nineteenth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public services of the country. The twentieth part of the report is devoted to a description of the various public institutions of the country.

No. 1.

Extract of a letter from the Commissioner of the General Land Office to G. Davis, dated 21st January, 1826.

"I am pleased to find that you are getting offers for surveying the lands in the Choctaw District, for \$ 3 50 per mile, which I think they can generally be surveyed for. I had, previous to your communication, heard of the lake between the Yazoo and the Mississippi rivers, and that the lands adjacent were free from inundation, and of good quality. It is desirable that these lands should be surveyed, and if you have not reached this body of land in your regular surveying, you may extend your meridional and parallel lines, to enable you to connect them with the surveying executed.

It will probably be advisable to survey the lots adjacent to the lake, agreeably to the provisions of the act of the 24th of May, 1824.

P. S. I do not feel authorized to give instructions for surveying the lands, under the act of the 24th of May, 1824, different from those heretofore given."

No. 2.

SURVEYOR'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON, (MISS.)
31st January, 1827.

The enclosed correspondence, on the subject of obtaining papers from the Office of the Registers at Washita and Opelousas, is sent to Mr. Haile, as an act of justice to those concerned, in consequence of my having, in my communication of the 12th instant, given it as my opinion that I had no other way of obtaining them than by paying the fees affixed to the duties of issuing them, by law. The perusal of them is well worthy the attention of such of our law-makers as are disposed to cast censure, or to countenance censure cast, upon executive officers of the Government, for the non-execution of laws which carry the most conclusive evidence upon the face of them that they never were intended to be executed. Let any candid man look at the act of the 24th of May, 1824, and compare it with the Treasury construction of the law, and with my letters to the Commissioner of the General Land Office, and to Mr. Cook, of the House of Representatives, upon that subject; and if he does not agree with me, that the same law ought to have raised the price of surveying to seven or eight dollars per mile, and to have allowed this office one extra clerk for every deputy employed in its execution, I shall conclude, and shall

be able to demonstrate, that he is incapable of understanding the subject. I have understood that two surveyors who had taken contracts for surveying, to be executed upon that plan, in the vicinity of Lake Washington, in the Choctaw District, have abandoned them, to avoid ruin.

All surveying executed under the authority of the Government, ought to be liberally paid for by the Government; and in cases where the claimants are now required to pay, they should make the payments to the Land Offices, on receiving their patents.

If Mr. Haile will have the goodness to leave the enclosed papers at the General Land Office, it will probably be the only favor that I shall ever ask of him.

G. DAVIS.

HON. WM. HAILE,
House of Representatives.

The enclosed papers are numbered from 1 to 4.

NOTE.—One of the Clerks in this Office has just now completed the examination of a small fractional township, recently surveyed, according to the act of 24th May, 1824, consisting of not more than what is equal to ten complete square sections, the tabling of which, with the assistance of the Deputy Surveyor himself, has occupied two entire days of close application; and the front on the river, consisting of only six sections and about a half, has filled 19 pages of foolscap paper. It will occupy the same clerk, who is a very expert calculator, two days more, or perhaps three, to complete the calculation of areas, and the subdivisions of the fractional square sections; and four days afterwards to make thence neat maps and descriptions of this small fraction, but little more than quarter of a township. Let this be taken as a sample of the work required to be done, in a given time, in the two States of Louisiana and Mississippi.

No. 3.

Extract of a letter from G. Davis, Esq. to G. Graham, Esq. Commissioner, &c. dated 29th June, 1827.

“I will take this occasion to report to you, formally and officially, as I have several times done incidentally, heretofore, that the law of 24th May, 1824, cannot be executed in conformity with your instructions on the subject—the *execution* of a surveying contract being a very different business from that of *entering into one*, through a *mistake*, produced by a want of experience. The experiment being now made, to the ruin of those who have embarked in the business, no further contracts are or can be expected, nor could they be executed if obtained.”

It is to be understood that the above is a summary of the information
received from the various sources and is not intended to be a complete
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